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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HARRIS.

1868-1920.

Benjamin Franklin Harris, son of Henry Hickman Harris and Melissa Megrue, was born on the old Harris farm in Champaign County, where his father also was a native, on September 30, 1868. He had liberal advantages during his youth and every incentive to make the best of his personal talents. Besides the common and high school he attended the University of Illinois 1887 to 1889, and in 1892 was graduated from the law department of Columbia University. The law was only a part of his preparation for life not a profession. He returned home to assist in the management of farm lands and business enterprises and continued the work of his father and grandfather as livestock farmers and bankers. From 1892 to 1899 he owned, developed and consolidated all street railway, lighting, power and gas plants in the twin cities. He succeeded his father as President of the First National Bank of Champaign and in 1911-12 served as President of the Illinois Bankers Association. He served as chairman of the Agricultural Commission of the American Bankers Association and President of the Conference Committee on agricultural development and education of all state bankers associations. It was he who developed the Banker-Farmer Movement in 1908, and as the organizer of the Agricultural Commission of the American Bankers Association he held the post of chairman for five years. He also edited the Banker-Farmer Magazine, which has a nation-wide circulation.

Mr. Harris, in addition to his part in the notable movement, had also the distinction of being "the father of the county agent movement," which has spread rapidly over the whole country until the county agent or agricultural adviser can be found in practically every progressive agricultural county in the country. While the need of systematic advice and cooperation between state and federal government, and

the individual farmer has long been recognized, it was Mr. Harris who definitely formulated the plan for such cooperation in the person of the county agent, and the great agricultural journals including the Breeders' Gazette, the Prairie Farmer and others, have taken pains to emphasize Mr. Harris' leadership and the credit due him for inaugurating this movement.

Mr. Harris was for many years active in the propaganda in Illinois for securing the adequate supervision of private banks by the State Government. He wrote and spoke on banking and agricultural subjects and in that field was without question one of the most competent authorities in the country. He served three terms as President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Harris was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, was a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason, was a member of the University Club, the Union League and South Shore Country Clubs of Chicago. He was a member of the Methodist church. On December 5, 1895 he was married to Miss May Melish of Cincinnati and to them were born Henry H. Harris, William Melish Harris, B. F. Harris, Jr., and Elizabeth Harris. He was vice chairman of the Illinois State Council of Defense. For many years he was a member of the Illinois State Historical Society in which he was much interested. In May 1915 he prepared an address on The Story of the Banker-Farmer Movement which was read at the annual meeting of that year and later became a part of the Transactions of the Society for 1915.

His death occurred December 19, 1920.